

# The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only



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# Prologue

**W**hat a year! 2004 has been very succesful for the adventure genre and things can only go better in 2005. We have had a lot of variety and a lot of quality as well. Western, espionage thriller, fantasy, science fiction, investigation ... there was something for everybody. We might have missed the super-classic adventure but we had a lot of really good ones. In this booklet we would like to reward the best adventures that were released this year.

The awards reflect more or less the ratings that these games received from The Inventory this past year. We also created some polls in our forums at [www.theinventory.org/forum](http://www.theinventory.org/forum) and asked our fans to vote for their favourites out of the nominees. The games that received the most votes in these polls will win our Readers' Choice Award. Now we could have said that the winners of those polls would win the The Inventory Awards, but we chose not to. Why? Because it could have been unfair. And here is why. No one can guarantee that the people who vote have played all the games that were nominated for each category. So let's say that ficticious character John, likes games A and B. Games A,B,C,D and E are nominated for the Best Story award. Let's say that game D has the best story out of all these nominees, but since John has not played D yet, he votes for B which, he thinks, has a better story than A.

The awards are divided in 17 categories. These are: Best Story, Best Male Character, Best Female Character, Best Dialogues, Best Graphics, Best Backgrounds, Best 3D models, Best Cutscenes, Best Soundtrack, Best Acting, Best Gameplay, Best Interface, Best Developer, Best Publisher, Best Indie Adventure, Best Adventure Game and Most Awaited Upcoming Adventure.

Reading through the booklet, you will first get to read a page where all the nominees are listed, and a short description of the reasoning behind their nomination, and then on the next page you will get to read which adventure won the award and which adventure won the runner-up position. Right after that you will get to read our Readers' Choice, based on the polls in The Inventory forum.

So enough with the prologue now, let's see what were the best adventures this year that were featured in our magazine.

*Dimitris Manos*

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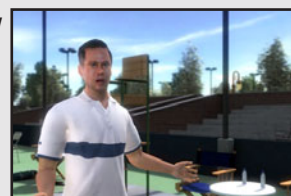
## Best Story

The purpose of story in adventure games is to pull the player away from his/her 'world', and take him/her by the hand to the virtual plane of its own reality. The genre does not matter. It can be a thriller, a comedy or a drama. The story could be about space or about medieval times. It could be about a baby girl, or about an old guy. It could be about a cowboy, a knight, a spy, a princess or a lawyer. What matters is that the story gives you the feeling you are immersed in its reality.

### Nominees:

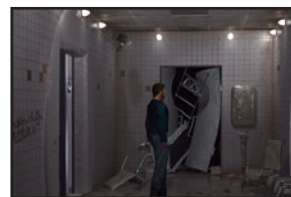
#### 1. Law and Order: Justice is Served

Legacy Interactive has traditionally used professional writers to write the story for their Law & Order games. This shows in each and every one of them. Their main disadvantage however lies in the weak main characters. Even after you have finished all three games, you do not know a single thing about the main characters' ambitions, likes or dislikes making them look kind of shallow in the long run.



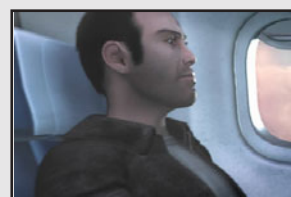
#### 2. Midnight Nowhere

Midnight Nowhere might have been a very niche game. It will certainly appeal only to people who can tolerate vulgar language and nudity, but if you do tolerate that, then you are in for a great story. You wake up in a morgue and everyone in the hospital is dead, brutally murdered. Gradually you will learn more and more why, and the ending will make you want to play it all over again.



#### 3. The Moment of Silence

It was a long time since we last saw an espionage thriller and House of Tales managed to deliver an action-packed scenario with a well-developed main character. The Moment of Silence offered a lot of interesting dialogues, moments full of suspense and a satisfying ending. The only disadvantage was some over-the-top incidents that would hardly happen in reality, even within the context of the game's story.



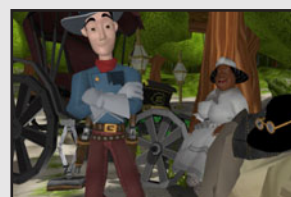
#### 4. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring

Frogwares changed radically their game design ideology and from the story-less Case of the Mummy they went to the story-full Case of the Silver Earring. Sherlock this time felt much more like the Sherlock we all know and even Watson played an important role in the game. A slight drawback of Silver Earring's story was the large number of 'adventure games' cliches.



#### 5. The Westerner

Revivronic delivered something we had not seen in quite a while and that only Al Lowe managed to do it right in the past. A comedy western that will have you laughing from beginning to end. Adorable characters, witty dialogues, and a great script. The introduction is very informative and the ending is extremely rewarding, giving you a feeling of accomplishment.



The **Best Story** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



Western stories are not trendy nowadays. You hardly ever see a western movie being made. But Revistronic proved that no matter what genre the story may belong to, if the writing is exceptional, then the plot can grip the player by the hand and pull him right in the game. It has to be noted here, that the script for the English version (which was the one we reviewed) was retouched by Steve Ince. We have not played the Spanish version, therefore we do not know if there are any differences between the two scripts, all we know is that the English one is astounding. And when was the last time you played a really good humorous game? I guess the year you are looking for is not in this century now is it? A lot of people have described The Westerner as Al Lowe's Freddy Pharkas, and if you have played that one then you probably know what to expect from The Westerner's story.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best Story Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# The Moment of Silence



Martin Gantefoehr has a bright future ahead of him in the adventure genre. His writing is top-notch in this futuristic espionage thriller. The Moment of Silence brought adventure games one step further by incorporating politics in its storyline. The issues brought up in the game are very current and during the game you will find a lot of times wondering what your own opinion is on some of the topics discussed by the characters in the game. Most of the characters are quite interesting and you can learn a lot about them through the dialogues.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

The **Readers' Choice for Best Story** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

Futuristic conspiracies appear to be very popular among our readers. In the poll for the Best Story award we had 77 voters. The Moment of Silence was first with 54 votes. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring was second with 12 votes. The Westerner was third with 5 votes. Midnight Nowhere was fourth with 4 votes. Law & Order: Justice is Served was last with 2 votes.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

# Best Male Character

Adventure games have traditionally featured a wide variety of male characters, from Casanova writers (Gabriel Knight), wise ruling kings (King Graham) and sleezy losers (Larry Laffer) to not really mighty pirates (Guybrush Threepwood), rebel bikers (Full Throttle Ben) and time travellers trying to defeat death (Shadow of Memories - Eike) Let's see what were the best male characters to be featured in adventures this year.

## Nominees:

### 1. Alexander Zale (Cirque De Zale)

Alexander Zale, a circus poop boy, is so mean that his behaviour redefines the word obnoxious. All he wants to do is to build his own circus and there is no kingdom-saving offer to stop him from his ultimate goal. A very original character created by Rebecca Clements.



### 2. Fenimore Fillmore (The Westerner)

The clumsy cowboy, knows a pretty girl when he sees one and he will go to extremes to make her his girlfriend. Not having a life-dream, he wanders around and tries to help farmers in exchange for food and money. Fenimore's disadvantage is that he looks veeerry similar to a famous toy ;).



### 3. Peter Wright (The Moment of Silence)

Peter Wright has recently suffered a great loss. At the beginning of the game he is very confident in the protection provided to him by his own government, but soon he is about to find out that there is more to the world than what the media preach. Since he can't help himself, he tries to find consolation by helping others.



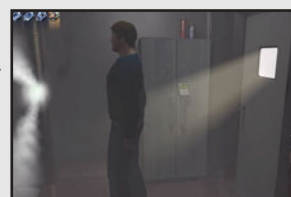
### 4. Sherlock Holmes (Case of the Silver Earring)

Sherlock Holmes is more 'Sherlock' than ever before. He makes Ingenious comments about everything and everyone around him. His deductions are usually on spot, and he's always one step ahead from the police. Frogwares managed to create a character that is identical to what Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had created.



### 5. Survivor (Midnight Nowhere)

Another obnoxious character in our list. Starting at blank point he wakes up with no recollection whatsoever and he has to find out what happened and also to rediscover himself. If you don't mind strong language here and there, you might find his comments really funny at times.



The **Best Male Character** Award goes to:

# Peter Wright



Peter is the kind of guy who would not hurt a fly. The Peter we get to know in the beginning of the game is quite different from the Peter in the end of The Moment of Silence. He starts out as a naive communications manager who takes for granted certain things in life. He has suffered a great loss, and you can hear it clearly in almost every second comment he makes. That is another good characteristic of Peter. He opens himself up to the player. He will give comments about everything and everyone he gets to meet during his adventure and sometimes he will even try to help you with some of the tasks in the game, by giving you a short hint. All in all, Peter Wright is a character that you will get to care for quite soon in the game. Will this communications manager accomplish his mission? Find out in The Moment of Silence.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company



The **Best Male Character Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# Sherlock Holmes



A real British gentleman, Sherlock can manage to win a crowd with his ingenious comments and his sharp observations. He can make up a full fledged theory out of a strand of hair or a clothe piece. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would probably smile if he played Case of the Silver Earring with some of Sherlock's stories. The developers from Ukraine managed to create a virtual personality that appears like it jumped right out of a Sherlock Holmes book.

Review: The Inventory 17

Developer: Frogwares

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, Ubisoft



The **Readers' Choice for Best Male Character** Award goes to:

# Peter Wright

Peter Wright managed to win our readers' choice as well. There were 76 votes in total. Peter Wright came first with 26 votes. Fenimore Fillmore came second with 23 votes. Sherlock Holmes came third with 20 votes. Cirque De Zale came fourth with 5 votes. The survivor from Midnight Nowhere came last with 2 votes. Now that's just an assumption but we'd say he probably didn't fare too well with the ladies (ouch!).

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company



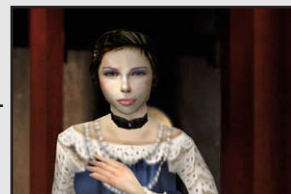
# Best Female Character

Main characters in adventure games used to be male for the most part during the 80s. That changed though when ladies such as Rosella (King's Quest 4) and Laura Bow took the adventure torch from the guys and held it high up. Many will even say that it is due to two other ladies, April Ryan and Kate Walker, that the adventure genre is still going strong. Let's see who were the best female characters in the adventures released this year.

## Nominees:

### 1. Abigail (Jack the Ripper)

Abigail might not be a lead character, but she was certainly memorable. Her crystal clear voice marked her character as one of the most memorable secondary characters in adventure games. She is a young singer in the Low Side District and her dream is to leave this place for a better life somewhere else.



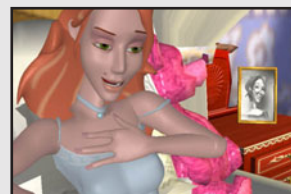
### 2. Kate Walker (Syberia 2)

Kate has left her old life once and for all, and the only thing on her mind right now is to bring Hans and his wondrous locomotive to the island of Syberia. She looks more stylish this time around and she has finally gotten used to Oscar and his weird comments. But she still walks a lot.



### 3. Miss Rhiannon (The Westerner)

Miss Rhiannon is the kind of woman who is hot and knows it. She is constantly looking for her prince charming that is going to come by Starek City and will take her away to adventurous journeys. Although her uncle is bossing her around all the time, she usually does not listen to him and behaves as she sees fit.



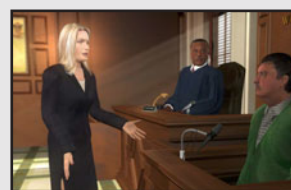
### 4. Ren Silver (Legacy: Dark Shadows)

Ren is a woman you really do not want to mess around with. She likes her guns big...as big as possible. If the adventure genre needed a feminine action-hero, Ren will probably fill the spot just about right. If there is a safe on the wall and she doesn't know the combination she will just blow the thing away and get the job done!



### 5. Serena Southerlyn (Justice is Served)

Serena Southerlyn is a very serious Assistant District Attorney, that would win an audience with her poisture and tone of voice. The professional acting really brings out the character of Serena inside the court. Too bad that her background otherwise is absolutely blank.





The **Best Female Character** Award goes to:

# Kate Walker



Kate Walker wins the award of the Best Female Character for the year 2004. She shows ambition and determination in her quest to find the isle of Syberia and to help Hans Voralberg fulfil his lifetime dream. The decision she took in the end of Syberia 1, changed her life forever. There is no way back for Kate and she is well aware of that. She will try to help others as well on her way to Syberia, even though she knows that she is running out of time. The actress behind Kate Walker, Sharon Mann, played also an important role in bringing out the determined character of Kate. Her surname says a lot about her and sometimes she likes to keep to herself. This time around she changes clothes once in a while!

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

The **Best Female Character Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# Miss Rhiannon



Miss Rhiannon did not only win Fennimore Filmore's heart but she also won our Best Female Character Runner-Up Award. Stuck in the her uncle's ranch, she is dreaming for her prince to come and take her away, so that they can both travel to distand lands and live exciting adventures. Until that day however she is helping the kids to learn how to write and read. She doesn't hesitate going against her own family when she finds out that they have been responsible for much of the injustice against farmers. Some of her lines are hilarious and very memorable, especially when she is teasing Fenimore.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Readers' Choice for Best Female Character** Award goes to:

# Kate Walker

Kate Walker was the female character that appealed to our readers the most. There were 78 votes in total. Kate Walker came first with 58 votes. Miss Rhiannon came second with 10 votes. Abigail came third with 5 votes. Ren Silver came fourth with 3 votes, while Serena Southerlyn from Law and Order was the last one with 2 votes.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

# Best Dialogues

Interaction between characters is a very important aspect of an adventure. When the right words are said at the right time, they can make you laugh, they can make you sad, they can make you care for a character, or they can surprise you with the secrets they reveal. Here come the adventures released in 2004 that featured the best dialogues:

## Nominees:

### 1. Cirque De Zale

Rebecca Clements should write a screenplay. Period. The dialogues are way too funny for a freeware adventure. Alexander Zale has something mean (but at the same time funny) to say about everything. Each dialogue is so off beat that sometimes you won't mind reading them again and again.



### 2. CSI: Dark Motives

Ubisoft hires professional writers who have worked for the TV series before, to write the dialogues for their CSI games. Some of the comments thrown by the CSI agents during interrogations and discussions will make you grin quite often. In general the dialogues are very well written and are very well performed too by professional actors.



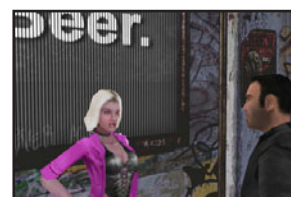
### 3. Law & Order: Justice is Served

The Law & Order games have a lot of things in common with the CSI games. As the CSI games, the Law & Order adventures are written by professional writers too. The sarcastic comments made by detectives Lennie Briscoe and Ed Green are identical to what you hear during the TV shows and the fans of the franchise will be certainly pleased.



### 4. The Moment of Silence

Philosophical questioning in adventure games? Why, of course, in The Moment of Silence. Chances are you are going to think that many of the game's dialogues could be heard during a normal day at your office, or a walk in the park. Some of them even add a lot of depth to the characters in the game.



### 5. The Westerner

A round at the shooting gallery? 1 dollar. 5 carrots? 2 dollars. A mobile telegraph? 15 dollars. A newspaper? 20 dollars. Some dynamite to blow up a bridge? 100 dollars. A joke from The Westerner? Priceless. The dialogues from The Westerner are just hilarious. Some days after you finish the game you will be still be able to remember some of the funniest lines.



The **Best Dialogues** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



Is it the developers' Latin temperament? Is it Steve Ince's touch on the game's dialogues? Is it the actors bringing out the characters well enough? Hard to say. What we can say however is that The Westerner has the best dialogues heard (or read) in adventure games this year. Apart from the funny nature of the dialogues, another achievement of The Westerner is that the amount of dialogues is just the right amount for the story. Usually characters in games are either too silent (call me Kate) or just speak too much (call me April). But The Westerner follows the 'Not too much and not too little' strategy which works out great.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revivronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best Dialogues Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# CSI: Dark Motives



The professional writing behind the CSI games, make it stand out from the rest of the adventures. The dialogues are created so that the player is immersed in the appropriate atmosphere of the scene. During an investigation CSI agents will be sarcastic but serious at the same time. The argot used in the game will make you feel like you really are partaking in a crime investigation. Too bad that the graphics and the gameplay of CSI: Dark Motives did not live up to the standards set by the dialogues and the storyline of the game.

Nevertheless, this does not undermine the fact that the dialogues are excellent.

Review: The Inventory 17

Developer: 369 Interactive

Publisher: Ubisoft

The **Readers' Choice for Best Dialogues** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

Our readers chose the The Moment of Silence as the adventure with the best dialogues for the year 2004. There were 71 votes in total. 36 of them went to the Moment of Silence. The Westerner received 21 votes. Cirque De Zale had 8 votes. CSI: Dark Motives and Law & Order: Justice is Served shared the last spot with 3 votes each.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company



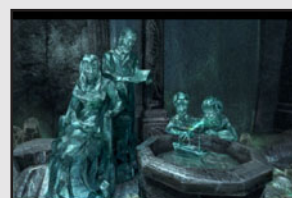
# Best Graphics

Since the day that Sierra invented the first graphic adventure, a LOT has changed. Millions of colours, thousands lines of pixels and polygons spread in either 2 or 3 dimensions, all make up for graphics more realistic than ever seen before. Adventures have become prettier with lots of companies pushing the limits of prerendered images while others exploring the advantages of real time environments. Here are the adventures released in 2004 that featured the best graphics.

## Nominees:

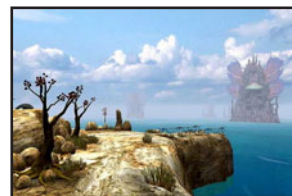
### 1. Myst IV

Myst 1 was a very revolutionary game in terms of graphics. Myst 4 is much less revolutionary, but it pushes the limits of older techniques, practically as far as they can be pushed. People who enjoy node-based graphics have called this the best looking node-based adventure to date. However node-based will always be... node-based.



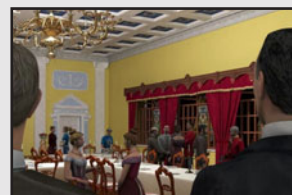
### 2. Schizm 2

Detallion followed a much more different strategy than the one Ubisoft chose for Myst IV. They decided to incorporate full 3D real time graphics instead. The result? One of the few 1st person adventures that make you feel like you are actually there, instead of teleporting from node to node.



### 3. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring

Frogwares also pushed the limits of prerendered backgrounds in their new adventure of the famous detective. The 3D models are extremely detailed, while the backgrounds are also very sharp. However, the game could have used more animation and little touches in the backgrounds, which are quite static.



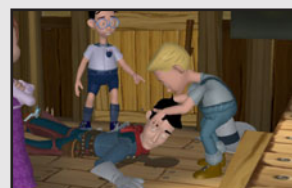
### 4. Syberia 2

When Syberia 2 was released, a lot of critics and fans said that this is as good as it gets when it comes to 2 and 1/2 D games. Benoit Sokal's artwork just blew everyone who played the game away, even those who did not enjoy the game itself so much! Syberia 2 offered much more camera cuts and much more animation than its predecessor.



### 5. The Westerner

Do you like movies from Pixar? You know, The Incredibles, Finding Nemo etc... If you do, then you will feel right at home with The Westerner. The Westerner is probably the most cinematic adventure that has been released so far. It really shows the advantages of 3D graphics.



The **Best Graphics** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



3D in adventure games? You bet! Revistronic proved beyond any doubt that it is not just possible to create an adventure in 3D but rewarding as well.

The camera is close to the action compared to the distant cameras usually used in 2D adventures, the camera cuts are plenty and keep interest during the dialogues high, the animation is fluid and vibrant and the cutscenes are seamlessly integrated with in-game footage in contrast to adventures with 2D backgrounds that make you feel as if the game stopped and you are

suddenly watching a video that has no graphical similarity to what you have just been playing. Two thumbs up for Revistronic that tried something new in the field of adventure games and they succeeded setting the standards for future 3D adventure titles.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best Graphics Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# Syberia 2



It is probably the best that 2D adventures can come up with, unless the upcoming Still Life or Lost Paradise will prove us wrong. Benoit Sokal is a very talented cartoonist and his drawings translate well on the computer screen.

The backgrounds are taken care to the most minute detail you can imagine. The developers have added a lot of animation throughout the game and some cuts during dialogues to give as much 3D feeling to a 2D adventure as possible. Some of the cutscenes will leave you breathless. Kate Walker, Hans

Voralberg, Oscar and all the other characters of Syberia 2 are lucky to have talented modelers like the ones from Microids to be their 'makers'.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

The **Readers' Choice for Best Graphics** Award goes to:

# Syberia 2

Our readers thought that Benoit Sokal and his team made the best graphics we saw in adventure games this year. Out of 82 votes, Syberia 2 received 38. Myst IV came second with 30 votes. The Westerner had 8 votes. Schizm 2 and Sherlock Holmes shared the last position with 3 votes each.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

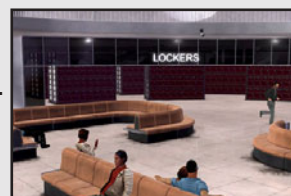
# Best Backgrounds

The technique of creating backgrounds has developed to a great extent nowadays. Just drawing a pretty picture is not going to cut it anymore. If it lacks the small touches and details it might give the sense that the player is looking at a still picture instead of a real moving environment. Let's see which adventures were nominated for the Best Backgrounds award.

## Nominees:

### 1. The Moment of Silence

The backgrounds of The Moment of Silence are for the most part well-drawn. Some locations are very stylish, such as the airport, the character's apartment and the underground. However, the truth is that they are quite static and they lack the small touches that would make them look more 'alive'.



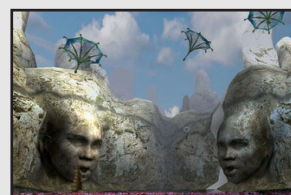
### 2. Myst IV

Ubisoft made full use of the power given to them by the prerendered nature of their engine and managed to create breathtaking backgrounds. Myst has traditionally been known for its detailed backgrounds. Now if they could have achieved a similar level of detail in full 3D, that would have been really something



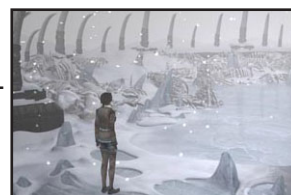
### 3. Schizm 2

Schizm 2 might have had a much smaller budget than Myst IV, however the developers dared to do much more with it than their rivals at Ubisoft. The free-roaming camera, made those backgrounds seem more alive than ever seen before in a first person adventure, marking the time for a change in the adventure industry.



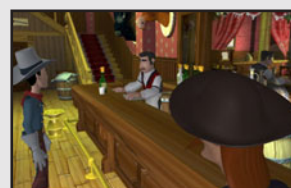
### 4. Syberia 2

Signature: Benoit Sokal. Some people just have a special talent. And Benoit Sokal's talent is to bring pictures into life. The backgrounds in Syberia 2 are so well designed, that sometimes you felt like putting a sweater on, just by looking at the snowy locations that Kate Walker was visiting.



### 5. The Westerner

Colours here, colours there, I see colours everywhere. The backgrounds of The Westerner are ideal for the cartoony feeling of the game with bright colours creating a very pleasant atmosphere. However, a few details here and there could have been done better.





The **Best Backgrounds** Award goes to:

# Syberia 2



ture games can offer nowadays.

Somebody please put the screenshots from Syberia 2 in an art gallery! The pencil of Benoit Sokal creates backgrounds that are way above in quality than anything else we have seen in adventure games this year or all the previous years before. The 2D nature of the backgrounds give it a slight advantage in terms of quality compared to other 3D backgrounds like The Westerner and Schizm 2 but the gap is closing down as years go by. Nevertheless in year 2004, Syberia 2 has the best backgrounds that adven-

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

The **Best Backgrounds Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# Schizm 2



ing through the enviroments. Detalion certainly won their 3D bet.

1st person adventures have traditionally used prerendered graphics. To achieve that the developers had to use a node-based navigation system and this makes the transition from one screen to the next very clumsy. Detalion, although not the richest kids on the block, were brave enough to try something new and to develop Schizm 2 in real time 3D graphics. The outcome is truly spectacular and it is probably the most immersive 1st person adventure game to date. Instead of feeling like you are looking at the backgrounds standing inside a crystal ball surrounding you, you feel like you are actually there walk-

Review: The Inventory 15

Developer: Detalion

Publisher: The Adventure Company

The **Readers' Choice for Best Backgrounds** Award goes to:

# Syberia 2

It seems like Syberia has a very stong fan-group among our readers since Syberia 2 won this Reader's Choice Award as well. Out of 82 votes, Syberia 2 got 49 votes leaving Myst IV at second place with 15 votes. The Moment of Silence had 13 votes and The Westerner 3. Schizm 2 was last with 2 votes.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

## Best 3D Models

There is still a debate among adventure developers whether backgrounds should be in 2D or 3D but when it comes to characters, there is almost not a single commercial developer that uses 2D anymore. 3D models are much easier to animate, and the advancements in technology have made the blocky 3D models we used to see in the end of the 90s a thing of the past. Here are the nominees for the Best 3D Models award:

### Nominees:

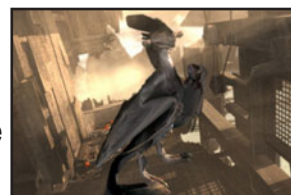
#### 1. Law and Order: Justice is Served

The 3D models in Law and Order: Justice is Served, look amazingly similar to their real-life counterparts. Jerry Orbach might look a bit younger than he does in real life, but still the amount of detail on the models is very high. Too bad the characters are not that ... mobile during gameplay.



#### 2. Myst IV

Human characters in Myst were filmed and then integrated in the game, but Myst: Revelation featured also a lot of animals in 3D, and their animation as well as design were phenomenal. The absence of human 3D models however brings Myst IV in a disadvantage compared to the rest of the candidates.



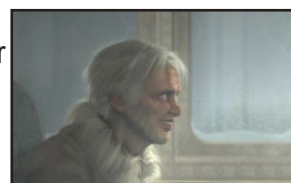
#### 3. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring

The characters in Sherlock Holmes are very realistic. Especially the facial details are very well done, and they don't lose in quality even during close-ups (where you can even see wrinkles on Sherlock's face). Unfortunately, lip-synching and walk cycles are not on par with the rest of the models' features.



#### 4. Syberia 2

The 3D models in Syberia 2 have the sharpest look out of all the nominees. It is no wonder that Benoit Sokal and his new team, White Birds Productions are planning to expand their new franchise Aquarica to the cinema, since the models of Syberia 2 could have been used even for a movie on the big screen



#### 5. The Westerner

The models in The Westerner are just exceptional. The animation is seamless while at the same time slightly exaggerated so that it fits perfectly the cartoon characters. Revivestronic decided to feature outtakes after the end of the game, and it feels just about right because it feels like the models are acting with their facial expressions and their body postures.



The **Best 3D Models** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



The Westerner wins one more award, this time for Best 3D Models. What makes the 3D models of The Westerner stand out from the rest of the 3D models adventure-crowd is their animation, in the form of facial gestures and body language. There is so much expression and 'acting' in every single movement. The developers also achieved to avoid the polygon look that models from 3D adventure games had some years ago. The models of The Westerner set the standard for future releases. It is positive to see that other developers, like Prograph, try to follow the graphic paradigm set by Revistronic.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best 3D Models Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# Syberia 2



Syberia 2 collects one more graphics-related award. Microids has really excelled its modelling techniques and Syberia 2 was their best example for the year that just passed. The models were very sharp and their animation was of high standards as well. It was a pity that the distant cameras did not allow us to see clearly facial expressions during dialogues. During the cutscenes the facial expressions were great, but their absence (almost) during in-game footage gave The Westerner the Best 3D Models Award and Syberia 2 the Best 3D Models Runner-Up Award. We expect from Microids to do even better in Still Life. It seems that the models there will have even better animation than in Syberia 2!

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

The **Readers' Choice for Best 3D Models** Award goes to:

# The Westerner

Our readers agreed that The Westerner had the best 3D models seen in any adventure game this past year. There were 74 votes. The Westerner had 28 votes, passing Syberia 2 by 1 vote (27). Myst IV had 11 votes while Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring managed to collect 8 votes. Nobody voted for Law & Order.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus



# Best Cutscenes

Cutscenes in adventure games usually come as a reward after the player completes certain tasks. A little eye-candy always gives you this feeling of accomplishment and the better the cutscenes the more rewarded the player feels, as if he/she just managed to do something great. Let's see which adventures are the nominees for the Best Cutscenes award.

## Nominees:

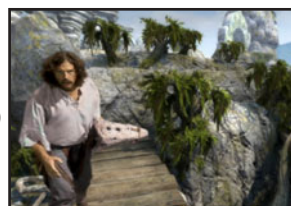
### 1. The Moment of Silence

The Moment of Silence featured some of the most cinematic cutscenes you have seen in adventure games. Most of them are action-packed and combined with the excellent soundtrack they give you the feeling that you have really accomplished something when you have solved a problem in the game.



### 2. Myst IV

The mysterious world of Myst IV has some really impressive cutscenes to offer if you are determined enough to solve its puzzles. The game utilizes FMV so you have the chance to watch real actors on your monitor. The acting however is mediocre at times. The video direction on the other hand is very professional.



### 3. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring

The Case of the Silver Earring features some lengthy cutscenes. The detail of the 3D models will impress (both in design and animation), but the video direction has its ups and downs with some camera angles not being the best possible. Nevertheless the cutscenes of this Sherlock Holmes game are a joy to watch.



### 4. Syberia 2

If you ever watch the trailer of Syberia 2 (available at the official website) you will think that it is a trailer to a movie and not to a game, because they only show cutscenes in the trailer. Syberia 2 featured excellent cutscenes from an audiovisual aspect, but the cutscenes content was a bit over the top while lots of them show only two men speaking on the phone.



### 5. The Westerner

Apart from the fact that the animation of the models is the best we have seen in a comic 3D adventure, another thing that makes The Westerner's cutscenes so great is the fact that they look identical to the in-game graphics. The contents of the cutscenes are also top notch.



The **Best Cutscenes** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



The Westerner offers players with over 40 minutes cutscenes extravaganza. And it makes it in way that it does not feel out of place since the graphics quality and style are the same during in-game scenes and cutscenes. During the cutscenes, the direction is great and the acting (characters expressions and movements) is amazing too. The developers went even the extra mile to include outtakes after the end of the game which are completely hilarious. The right way to end the most cinematic adventure to come out in a long time.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best Cutscenes Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# The Moment of Silence



From the very beginning of The Moment of Silence you realize that this is going to be an adventure with impressive cutscenes. The videos you will see are action-packed and original - *\*spoilers\** it is not everyday you see someone shooting the statue of liberty *\*end of spoilers\** - and it will make you want to lay back on your chair and enjoy. The reason why TMOS did not win the Best Cutscenes award instead of The Westerner is that in TMOS when you watch the cutscenes you feel like the game stopped and you are watching a video because the graphics are so different. Furthermore, for some strange reason there are no dialogues during cutscenes, something that happened in The Longest Journey as well, which felt a bit odd.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

The **Readers' Choice for Best Cutscenes** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

Our readers' opinion was that The Moment of Silence had the best cutscenes out of all the adventures released in 2004. There were 75 votes in total. 33 readers voted for The Moment of Silence, 26 readers voted for Syberia 2, 9 readers voted for Myst IV, 4 voted for The Westerner and 3 voted for Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

# Best Soundtrack

20 years ago the beep-beep of the PC speaker was considered state of the art if it managed to create a tune. Nowadays a beep-beep is certainly not enough, and the soundtracks to adventure games are very reminiscent to soundtracks one would hear in multi-millionaire movies. Let's see which adventures featured the best soundtracks for the year 2004

## Nominees:

### 1. Jack the Ripper

The Irish Nightingale and her songs will stay in your memory as one of the most memorable experiences you have had in gaming. Although Jack the Ripper was not an exceptional adventure per se, one should play it for its music alone! Galilea have made a name for themselves when it comes to music production.



### 2. The Moment of Silence

Germany is the country that gave us the great composer Hans Zimmer, whose music has been used for popular movies like Crimson Tide and The Rock. The Moment of Silence has a soundtrack that is very reminiscent of Zimmer's music and that adds suspense and thrill to the action scenes of the game.



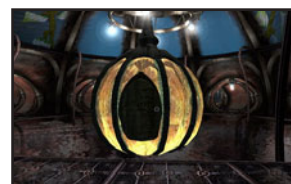
### 3. Myst IV

Jack Wall made some impressive work on Myst IV, mixing instruments and vocals appropriately in order to capture the feeling of each respective Age within the game and in order to create an epic atmosphere. Myst IV, like URU, featured also a song performed by the famous Peter Gabriel.



### 4. Schizm 2

Detalion from Poland proves once more that budget isn't everything. Schizm 2: Mysterious Journey featured fantastic orchestral score that was used to enhance the mood of Schizm's 3D world in an unobtrusive way.



### 5. Syberia 2

Microids decided to hire Inon Zur - famous for the soundtracks of Baldur's Gate 2: Throne of Bhaal and Icewind Dale - for the music of the sequel to Syberia. The result was a mix of eastern european music with orchestral cinematic tunes giving the soundtrack of Syberia 2 a fairy-tale feeling.





The **Best Soundtrack** Award goes to:



# Jack the Ripper



Djazia Satour will be remembered as one of the best performers to sing a song for the purposes of an adventure game. Every review raves about her outstanding performance as Abigail, singing three mesmerising ballads, "Come live with me", "The Three Ravens" and "Irish Rover". How could we not give the best soundtrack award to Jack the Ripper then? The rest of the soundtrack is also well composed but Djazia Satour is the main reason that Jack the Ripper's soundtrack stood out from all the rest. The Inventory

radio, that you can listen to at [www.theinventory.org](http://www.theinventory.org) plays those three ballads from time to time in case you want to listen to them again and again.

Review: The Inventory 12

Developer: Galilea

Publisher: The Adventure Company

The **Best Soundtrack Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# The Moment of Silence



Some of the very best soundtracks belong to espionage movies, like Spy Game and Bourne Identity/Supremacy. The Moment of Silence continues this legacy for the espionage genre but this time in the computer game industry. Orchestral music combined with strong electronic tunes and ambient sounds make up for a very atmospheric experience. There is even a couple of rock tunes (like the one in the Nuclear Cafe) to emphasize the alternative nature of the place. The most impressive tunes however are played during the

cutscenes where the action is boiling and every step of Peter leads to danger. If you enjoy music composed by Hans Zimmer and John Powell, you will be certainly satisfied with the soundtrack of The Moment of Silence.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

The **Readers' Choice for Best Soundtrack** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

The Moment of Silence won our Reader's Choice Best Soundtrack award. Out of 73 votes, The Moment of Silence had 25, Syberia 2 came second with 21, Myst IV came third with 15 votes, Jack the Ripper came fourth with 11 votes while Schizm 2 came last with 1 vote.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

## Best Acting

Acting is one feature where adventure games have deteriorated compared to the past. During the 90s we had a large number of adventure developers spending considerable amounts of cash to hire well-known actors for the purposes of their games. Nowadays it is only a few companies that dare to go that extra mile.

*Note: The nominations are based only on the English versions*

### Nominees:

#### 1. CSI: Dark Motives

Ubisoft is a very wealthy company and they would not think twice before bringing in the professional cast of a TV series for the respective game. 'Professional' is what they pay and 'Professional' is what you get. Once more the CSI cast made an excellent work providing the voice overs for their characters.



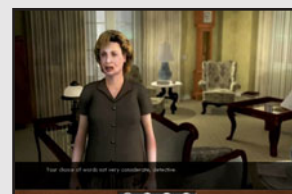
#### 2. Jack the Ripper

Except from the magnificent and mesmerising voice of Abigail, the rest of the voice-overs in the game were also of high standards. The actors make the bouncers, the policemen, the prostitutes and the tramps seem like they really come from New York in 1901.



#### 3. Law & Order: Justice is Served

The famous actor Jerry Orbach has given us a lot of hours of entertainment playing the sarcastic and self-confident detective Lennie Briscoe. Unfortunately he died some days before the end of 2004, due to prostate cancer. May he rest in peace. The rest of the cast also did a great job in the Law & Order: Justice is Served.



#### 4. Syberia 2

Sharon Mann is Kate Walker. Period. If Microids ever decides to release a third installment of Syberia they have to make sure that she will be on board. The rest of the cast suit well their respective characters as well with the actors playing Igor, Hans and Oscar doing a great job.



#### 5. The Westerner

Fortunately this fantastic game was not ruined by amateurish voice-overs. While not providing Oscar-winning material, the actors managed to bring out their characters fairly well with some of them even managing to immitate a western accent.



The **Best Acting** Award goes to:

# Law & Order : JIS



"Looks like somebody broke her serve...for good". This was one of the last quotes we will be hearing from the great Jerry Orbach. He might be gone but his performances as detective Lennie Briscoe will stay in our memories for years to come. His years of experience had the voice overs in the Law and Order games always one step ahead from the rest of the competition. The rest of the Law and Order cast, including new cast member Jesse L. Martin, also deliver top-of-the-food-chain performances and Legacy Interactive showed that paying a bit more can be a very good investment.

Review: The Inventory 20

Developer: Legacy Interactive

Publisher: Vivendi

The **Best Acting Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# CSI: Dark Motives



Can you go wrong with a cast including William Petersen, Marg Helgenberger, Gary Dourdan, Gorge Eads, Jorja Fox and Paul Guilfoyle casting their own TV characters? Not really. Ubisoft along with Legacy Interactive have managed to produce best selling material by using likenesses and voices of well known actors, showing the rest of the developing and publishing companies that investments in popular names most often pay back. Now if they also invested in some new graphic engines, that would be just swell!

Review: The Inventory 17

Developer: 369 Interactive

Publisher: Ubisoft

The **Readers' Choice for Best Acting** Award goes to:

# Syberia 2

Syberia 2 is according to our readers the adventure game that featured the best voice overs in 2004. There were 61 votes. Syberia 2 was first with 34 votes. The Westerner got the second place with 15 votes. Law & Order: Justice is Served took the third place with 5 votes, CSI was fourth with 4 votes and Jack the Ripper was last with 3 votes.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Microids

Publisher: XS Games

## Best Gameplay

The gameplay is another feature of adventure games where innovation is unfortunately an unknown word. Most developers will still rely on the old 'use newspaper under the door' sort of tasks and slider puzzles to introduce some challenge to their games. Did the nominees fare any better than that? Let's find out right away.

### Nominees:

#### 1. Cirque De Zale

Created only by one woman, Rebecca Clements, Cirque De Zale was superior in many ways compared to other commercial releases. Alexander Zale wants to get his own circus and to do that he will have to face many funny challenges, and all of them make sense...in a zany kind of way. It was however rather short in comparison to commercial games.



#### 2. Law & Order: Justice is Served

Legacy Interactive is a company that takes feedback from gamers very seriously. With the third instalment of their Law and Order series, they have tried to come closer to traditional adventure games by adding more puzzles. They also modified the interface of the game to make it more user friendly.



#### 3. Legacy: Dark Shadows

Razor Studios is a newcomer in the adventure industry. They might have not been the best when it comes to graphics and sound but their first game, Legacy: Dark Shadows had a very entertaining gameplay with logical tasks and a very steady game pace, something that other developers have failed to achieve.



#### 4. The Moment of Silence

The Moment of Silence has got much better gameplay features than the previous game of House of Tales, The Mystery of the Druids. Its advantages are the absence of pixel hunting and the fact that most of the tasks in the game are quite logical. The disadvantages are the poor navigation system, a show-stopper puzzle near the end and lots of walking.



#### 5. The Westerner

This 3D western comedy has a lot of fun tasks to solve. The pixel hunting is minimal and the players can solve tasks in a random order which allows for a lot of freedom and non-linearity. On the other hand the necessity to collect carrots for your horse in order to move from one place to the other is redundant while a couple of tasks were slightly obscure.





The **Best Gameplay** Award goes to:

# Legacy: Dark Shadows



Legacy: Dark Shadows lacks the technical virtues that would have given it higher ratings in the press and wide acclaim among fans. Nevertheless when it comes to gameplay, it's a whole different story. In Legacy, the developers made sure to always (apart from one case in the beginning) make explicit to the players what has to be accomplished next and always made sure that there would be enough hints for the players to go through a challenge without having to refer to a walkthrough. There was also quite a lot of interactivity within the game world in contrast to what we have gotten used to recently.

Review: The Inventory 18

Developer: Razbor Studios

Publisher: GMX Media

The **Best Gameplay Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# The Westerner



This was a hard choice between The Westerner and The Moment of Silence. They both have disadvantages in their gameplay. They both will 'waste' some of your time, The Westerner with its carrot-gathering and TMOS with its walking through empty screens. They both have 1 or 2 obscure tasks to solve. On the other hand they both have no pixel hunting, and apart from those 1 or 2 obscure tasks the rest are logical. The Westerner won in the long run by a very small margin due to its non-linearity. But the award could very well have been given to The Moment of Silence, both games are very entertaining to play with some small flaws here and there.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Readers' Choice for Best Gameplay** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

The Moment of Silence won our Reader's Choice for Best Gameplay. The Moment of Silence received 36 out of the 60 total votes. The Westerner was second with 9 votes. Legacy: Dark Shadows was third with 7 votes. Cirque De Zale was fourth with 6 votes. And Justice is Served was last with 2 votes.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

# Best Interface

An interface should always feel transparent and user-friendly. If the player starts fighting with the controls or if the player has to look at the manual every 10 minutes to remember how to perform a certain action, then this interface has failed. A part of the charm of an interface is also its design. Slick looking cursors and buttons are usually little touches but the difference between perfection and imperfection lies in the details. Let's take a look at the nominees.

## Nominees:

### 1. Cirque De Zale

Quite often independent developers make use of the interface that we saw in the older Lucasarts adventures, because ...well... it works great. Rebecca Clements went a step further and instead of just 'stealing' the GUI from a Lucasarts adventure she made her own 'skin' suiting the game's graphics and giving Cirque De Zale a distinct look.



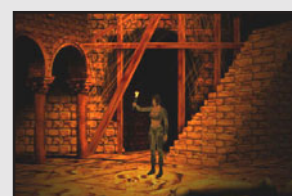
### 2. Law and Order: Justice is Served

Legacy Interactive is improving the interface of the Law & Order games in every new installment they release. Justice is Served was no exception to the rule. The interface was much more intuitive than in the previous installments and it made gameplay much simpler. The design was much more aesthetic too.



### 3. Legacy: Dark Shadows

Legacy: Dark Shadows had one of the most user-friendly interfaces ever seen in adventures. It was very reminiscent of the interface used in the Longest Journey and it was very easy to learn. One of its innovative features was the ability to scroll through your items on-screen with the mouse-roller.



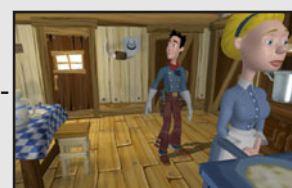
### 4. Schizm 2

The great thing about the interface of Schizm 2: Mysterious Journey, was that, in combination with the real time graphics, it gave you complete freedom to explore the environments of the game, unlike other 1st person adventures where you have to 'jump' from scene to scene.



### 5. The Westerner

The interface of The Westerner was very innovative. It proved that point and click suits 3D adventures like a glove! You did not have to memorise which key will open up your inventory and which key will pick up an item. You just lay back on your chair, you point, you click, and there you go.



The **Best Interface** Award goes to:

# Legacy: Dark Shadows



The interface of Legacy: Dark Shadows allows adventurers to do everything they would like to do in a 2D adventure in the easiest way possible. You have the ability to examine items and get a description from the main character. You can scroll items from your inventory on-screen using your mouse roller. You can also take a look at the log and get up to date with what has been going on in the game, in case you have not played it for a while. The design of the interface is also quite stylish and it will remind a lot of people the interface used in The Longest Journey (considered by some to be one of the best interfaces used in adventure games).

Review: The Inventory 18

Developer: Razbor Studios

Publisher: GMX Media

The **Best Interface Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# The Westerner



Fenimore Fillmore shouts out loud that point and click and 3D is the way to go! The interface of The Westerner is the only interface used in 3D adventures that has actually worked well since Gabriel Knight 3 (and this was lots of years ago). This marks a new age for adventure games and seeing that more developers start to create games in real time 3D like Frogwares and Prograph, the future seems bright. The interface of The Westerner could have been better though, since it gives no chance to hear a comment from Fenimore for the items he finds and the dialogue interface is not the best seen in aesthetical terms.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Readers' Choice for Best Interface** Award goes to:

# The Westerner

The Westerner won our readers choice for Best Interface. There were 51 votes in total. The Westerner had 20 votes. Legacy: Dark Shadows and Schizm 2 shared the second place with 11 votes. 6 readers voted for Cirque De Zale. Law and Order was last with 3 votes.

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

# Best Developer

It is tough being an adventure developer. You spend thousands of hours in front of a computer monitor trying to make everything right and to please thousands of picky adventure fans who are waiting for the second coming of adventure games that will bring their genre back to the forefront of gaming. And then when you send your review copies there are those ungrateful reviewers who will tear your baby apart, even though you have been working on it for ages. Here are the nominees.

## **Nominees:**

### **1. Frogwares**

Frogwares should be an example for many developers. Their first game, Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of the Mummy was a miss, and it received one of the lowest scores ever in our magazine. But since that a lot has changed. The differences between The Silver Earring and the Mystery of the Mummy are surprising to say the least, one could not imagine that both games came from the same company

### **2. House of Tales**

In House of Tales you find another developer that takes feedback from press and fans very seriously. The Moment of Silence is also far better than HoT's first title, Mystery of the Druids in many ways that we do not have space to describe right now. More credit goes to the German developers for staying very close to the adventure community and for participating in several online discussions.

### **3. Legacy Interactive**

Legacy Interactive is also another company that is very close to the community and is also dedicated to the adventure genre. Every new Law and Order game is improved in certain ways compared to its predecessor. The only drawbacks would be the lack of diversity in their titles (all their adventures have been under the Law and Order franchise) and the outdated graphic engine used until their last L&O title.

### **4. Microids**

With Microids, you have a developer that really outshines competition when it comes to the audiovisual aspects of adventures. However Microids has to work a little bit on the story and the gameplay features of their titles. Since the company had recently been through some financial trouble, we all hope that Still Life will give them the boost they need.

### **5. Revivtronic**

The Westerner was an amazing adventure. So the Spanish based Revivtronic proved that they know how to make a good cinematic experience. However this is not enough nowadays in the interconnected world we live in. Revivtronic has been probably the most absent developer from the adventure community. The company hardly replies to any emails (either by press or fans) and their website is hardly ever updated. Public relations is too important in the age we live in, and developers can't afford to ignore their audience.



The **Best Developer** Award goes to:

# House of Tales



The German based House of Tales wins the developer of the year award. Their adventure game *The Moment of Silence* is far better than the previous adventure they had released in the past, *The Mystery of the Druids*. They made good use of the feedback they received from adventurers for their first adventure and managed to improve in many ways. Apart from that, the developers have been following very close the proceedings in the adventure community and they have handled their public relations very well. We are all looking forward to their next title.

The **Best Developer Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# Frogwares



The developers from Ukraine have showed a strong support to the adventure genre, working on 2 adventures simultaneously almost every year. *Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring* might not have won many of our awards for 2004, but it was nevertheless a very solid adventure that received great reviews from specialized press in adventures and even general gaming press. They have been very close to the adventure community taking part in events and communicating even with their own fans. We wish them the best of luck on their new endeavours, *Around the World in 80 Days* and the new *Sherlock Holmes* adventure.

The **Readers' Choice for Best Developer** Award goes to:

# Microids

The Canadian based Microids is our readers' favourite developer. 70 readers voted for the Best Developer award. 34 of them chose Microids leaving House of Tales at second place with 30 votes. 4 of our readers voted for Frogwares. Revistronic got 2 votes. Legacy Interactive got no votes at all.

## Best Publisher

Being a publisher is not an easy job either. You have to please every single last member of the press out there, with exclusive screenshots, free review copies, and press releases, while at the same time you have to answer the mails of raging fans who have discovered a bug in their new game. Although some years ago publishers would not even think about releasing adventure games, things have changed radically lately, for the better. Let's see which were the best publishers this year.

### Nominees:

#### 1. The Adventure Company

The Adventure Company have established a steady business in North America and are now trying to expand to Europe as well. Although their line-up usually includes a lot of small-budget mediocre Myst clones, we should not forget that they did publish The Black Mirror last year, they published The Westerner, Schizm 2 and Return to Mysterious Island this year (which we haven't had the chance to review yet) and they will also publish The Moment of Silence and Still Life.

#### 2. Digital Jesters

Digital Jesters is a newbie publisher, but boy have they come in the community with a bang! They published The Moment of Silence and Sherlock Holmes in the UK and they came up with some revolutionary promotion strategies (at least for adventure games) by offering a Sherlock Holmes movie bundled with the game and by putting commercials of The Moment of Silence during the sci-fi TV show Battlestar Galactica. How about that for a start? Their adventure line-up however is quite short (2 titles).

#### 3. DTP

DTP has single-handedly kept the adventure genre alive in Europe during its difficult times. They have already great titles under their belt such as The Black Mirror, The Westerner, Runaway and Tony Tough. They have a very good PR campaign and they come up with new promotion strategies all the time. They plan to release even more adventures in the near future and they have recently even started acquiring worldwide rights for adventures like Tony Tough 2.

#### 4. Focus Home Interactive

France is another country where the adventure genre is quite popular. Focus Home Interactive have made titles like Runaway and The Westerner available to the French public and they will publish Runaway 2 soon.

#### 5. GMX Media

GMX Media's reputation is a bit shaky with the whole Runaway incident (the game has not been published in the UK due to some legal disagreements between the publishers and Pendulo) and their customer support could have been better, but they did publish The Black Mirror and Legacy: Dark Shadows and they seem to be giving more chances to adventure developers like Artematica.

The **Best Publisher** Award goes to:

# DTP



Many people claim that Germany is where the heart of adventures beats right now, and they are probably right. DTP is the best publisher for the year 2004. They have been supporting adventures for some years now and they have single-handedly revived the genre in the regions where they distribute their games. Their marketing techniques are state of the art. They promote their games on several press channels (be it TV, newspapers, magazines or websites) and with many different ways. They create comics for their upcoming titles, they provide press members with interviews and review / preview copies, they take care of localizations and now they even started purchasing worldwide rights for adventure games. A truly amazing company.

The **Best Publisher Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# TAC



The Adventure Company has been the only serious supporter of adventure games for years now in the North American market. Last year they published the best adventure game for 2003, *The Black Mirror*, this year they published *The Westerner* while next year they will publish *Still Life* and *The Moment of Silence*. Their PR techniques are stable and they are also very close to the adventure community in many ways. On the other hand maybe it wouldn't hurt to aim a bit higher by targeting audiences that are not traditionally interested in adventures or gaming in general. Nevertheless The Adventure Company has been a loyal supporter of adventure games.

The **Readers' Choice for Best Publisher** Award goes to:

# DTP

75 readers voted for the best publisher award and most of them agreed that DTP is the best publisher for the year 2004. DTP received 30 votes, leaving The Adventure Company at second place with 24 votes. The French based Focus came third with 12 votes. Digital Jesters had 6 votes while GMX Media was last with 3 votes.

# Best Indie Adventure

There are some developers out there, who might not get paid for their job, but they do it anyway for the love of the game! Even though if some of these games might not feature the latest graphics, their stories and gameplay style are usually equal (if not better) than most commercial releases out there. And the retro graphics have their own unique charm. Here are the best adventures by independent developers for the year 2004.

## Nominees:

### 1. Apprentice 2

Herculean Effort impressed adventure fans with their sequel to The Apprentice. Take the role of Mortimer Pibsworth and save the town of Willowbean from its own king, Lord Ironcrow. Conjure spells that will help you avoid being drafted to join Lord Ironcrow's army. Hurry up though cause Pib only has 1 day ahead of him.



### 2. Case of the Crabs

Nick Bounty is an unemployed P.I. A fish salesman gets stabbed on the back in Nick's office. You have to help Nick Bounty find out who is behind the murder and untangle the crabs conspiracy! This noir online adventure featured stylish graphics made in flash and had funny dialogues.



### 3. Cirque De Zale

Alexander Zale is sick and tired of being the circus poop boy and can't stand his ringmaster Astoundo. One day he decides to pull a practical joke on him, and Astoundo enraged sends him to another dimension. This doesn't really sadden Alexander as he is now free to pursue his lifetime dream, to make his own circus!



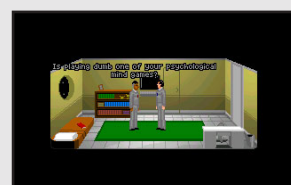
### 4. No-Action Jackson

RPG-Maniac Jackson wants to play a hack-n-slash game with his friends, but the arrival of his grandfather becomes an obstacle for him. His mother tells him to take care of his grandfather, but Jackson will do everything he can to escape from the house, gather his friends and engage in Slackmaster session.



### 5. 7 Days a Skeptic

Yahtzee's sequel to the 5 Days a Stranger mystery was also well accepted in the indie scene. This time around Yahtzee designed a new interface that was easier to use than its predecessor. The story takes place aboard a spaceship, 400 years after the first game, when the crew of Mephistopheles discover a mysterious artifact floating into space.





The **Best Indie** Award goes to:

# Cirque De Zale



It did not manage to win an award against the big commercial names but when it is placed alongside indie productions, Rebecca Clements' gem outshines the rest. Cirque De Zale - that many people described as Monkey Island meets Simon the Sorcerer - features a crazy plot, a malevolent main character, humorous dialogues and an interface that works like a charm. Its strongest point is of course the humour that - although mean-spirited - is very original and effective. The gameplay pace is also excellent with the challenges never holding you back for too long. We hope that Rebecca Clements will consider either making a sequel or creating a new adventure game sometime in the future.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Rebecca Clements

The **Best Indie Runner-Up** Award goes to:

# Apprentice 2



Apprentice 2 is probably the most technically advanced indie production for the year that passed. Great graphics with a unique style that will make you think of it as a better version of earlier King's Quest games. The music is also of high quality for indie standards. The story is great too featuring unique characters and funny dialogue lines. The gameplay is a mixed bag as the tasks range from logical to quite obscure and the interface although original could be easier to handle. Apprentice 2 was greatly improved compared to the first part and we are all waiting the third and last installment of this popular indie series with great anticipation.

Review: The Inventory 17

Developer: Herculean Effort

The **Readers' Choice for Best Indie** Award goes to:

# Case of the Crabs

Our readers chose Noir! There were 70 votes in total. Case of the Crabs won the Reader's Choice for the Best Indie award with 21 votes. Cirque de Zale and The Apprentice 2 shared the second place with 16 votes. No-Action Jackson had 9 votes. 7 Days a Skeptic was last with 8 votes.

Review: The Inventory 14

Developer: Otter Archives

# Best Adventure Game

And finally for the big one... The best adventure game for the year 2004. Many of our nominees were great adventures in many respects, but only one of them can be the Best Adventure Game of 2004. Let's see the nominees.

## Nominees:

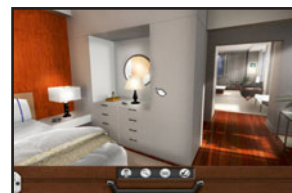
### 1. Cirque De Zale

An indie adventure competing with the big names? Well, due to the limited budget (zero) and to limited staff (1 person) the chances are slim but truth be told, Cirque De Zale was one of the most entertaining adventures released this year due to the hilarious dialogues and the satisfying gameplay.



### 2. Law & Order: Justice is Served

Justice is Served will be the last title to ever feature the legendary Jerry Orbach. Legacy Interactive improved on many aspects of the game compared to its previous installment, most notably its gameplay features and its interface. However the limitations in exploration due to its graphics engine make it difficult for Justice is Served to win the award.



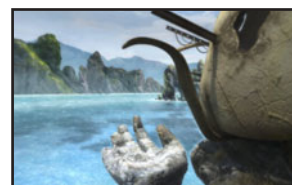
### 3. The Moment of Silence

One of the strongest candidates, The Moment of Silence, has won many of the previous awards and appears to be very popular among our readers. The gripping storytelling, the cinematic cutscenes and the professional soundtrack give The Moment of Silence a nice boost for the award.



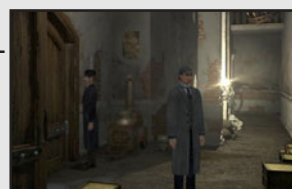
### 4. Myst IV

Myst IV might have not won a single award previously but was nevertheless a solid sequel to the best selling puzzle/adventure series. Some of its advantages include stylish visuals and a high quality soundtrack. But when Myst fans themselves say that some of the puzzles were unfair, the situation becomes quite difficult.



### 5. Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring

Sherlock Holmes did not win many of the awards either, but not being the best in each section does not necessarily mean that as an adventure game it is not great. Beautiful graphics, a satisfying plot (albeit with a couple of cliches) and an ending that makes you want to play it all over again made Case of the Silver Earring a hit.



### 6. The Westerner

Another favourite for the award. Fenimore Fillmore and his gang have won numerous awards already and they are ready to shoot for the Best Adventure award as well. Will they make it? Well the answer is on the next page, all you have to do our dear readers is turn the page and see for yourselves.



The **Best Adventure** Award goes to:



# The Westerner



It was a head to head race between The Westerner and The Moment of Silence. Both games had their fair share of flaws. But in direct comparison The Westerner appears to be the better game. The characters in the game emanate 'life' in their every move, in contrast to the 'stuck-on-a-spot' characters of The Moment of Silence. The navigation system works better even though it is a 3D adventure. Both games feature impressive cutscenes, but the cutscenes from The Westerner are better integrated with the rest of the game. It is non-linear, giving the player greater freedom within the game, but at the same time there is always something interesting to do at every game scene, in contrast to the Moment of Silence where sometimes you will be simply walking through a screen without any particular reason. For these and many other reasons the best adventure game for 2004 is The Westerner. If Al Lowe was still making adventures today, he would probably make something like this game!

Review: The Inventory 19

Developer: Revistronic

Publisher: The Adventure Company, DTP, Focus

The **Best Adventure Runner-Up** Award goes to:



# The Moment of Silence



The Moment of Silence could as well have been the winner. The main theme of the game, big brother theories and espionage, is of course a much more popular and much more current theme nowadays than westerns. The decision of the developers to add a political and philosophical perspective to the whole story is very innovative for adventure games. The main character is very interesting and the game makes you care for him. If it wasn't for a few gameplay flaws and a quite outdated graphics engine, The Moment of Silence could have very well won the award. It is nevertheless one of the best adventures we have played the last 5 years.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

The **Readers' Choice for Best Adventure** Award goes to:

# The Moment of Silence

Our readers had a totally different opinion. According to 43 of our readers The Moment of Silence was the best adventure game for the year 2004. 14 other readers considered Myst IV to be the best adventure. Sherlock Holmes was third with 8 votes. The Westerner received 6 votes. Cirque De Zale and Law & Order shared the last spot with 2 votes each.

Review: The Inventory 18,20

Developer: House of Tales

Publisher: DTP, Digital Jesters, The Adventure Company

# Most Awaited Upcoming Adventure

This award will be depended exclusively on the fans' votes. Why? Because the fans might not have played all the adventures released this year, but they know more or less as much as we do about the upcoming adventures out there, so it is fair to let the readers choose in this case.

The **Most Awaited Upcoming Adventure** Award goes to:



## A Vampyre Story



An adventure game developed by the people that gave us some of the best adventure classics, like Curse of the Monkey Island, The Dig, Sam and Max, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis? How could it ever not be the most awaited adventure game? This great looking game surpassed by far every other title on the list. Out of 106 votes, 40 of them were for A Vampyre Story! Due for release in 2006, this vampyre comedy has already won the hearts of adventurers around the world who are longing for a title which will reach the quality that the older Lucasarts classics used to provide.

Preview: The Inventory 16

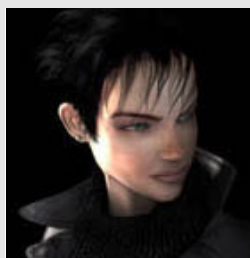
Interview: The Inventory 20

Developer: Bad Brain / Autumn Moon Entertainment

The **2nd Most Awaited Upcoming Adventure** Award goes to:



## Still Life



Still Life won the 2nd place with 14 votes, beating Runaway 2 by a single vote. When everyone thought that 2D could not get any better after playing Syberia 2, Microids took the challenge of proving everyone wrong by developing Still Life. This dark thriller featuring Victoria and Gus McPherson will be released on April 15th by The Adventure Company. The story is a Post Mortem spin-off, although the graphics this time will be in 3rd person. Adventurers are eagerly awaiting to step into the shoes of Victoria and Gus.

Interview: The Inventory 16

Developer: Microids

Publisher: The Adventure Company



# The Inventory Awards 2004 Wrap-up

This is the end of our Awards 2004 booklet. Here we provide you with a table of all the adventures that were nominated and the number of awards they won.

	<b>Best Award</b>	<b>Runner-up Award</b>	<b>Readers' Choice</b>	<b>Total</b>
7 Days a Skeptic	0	0	0	0
Apprentice 2	0	1	0	1
Case of the Crabs	0	0	1	1
Cirque De Zale	1	0	0	1
CSI: Dark Motives	0	2	0	2
Jack the Ripper	1	0	0	1
Law & Order: JIS	1	0	0	1
Legacy: Dark Shadows	2	0	0	2
Midnight Nowhere	0	0	0	0
No-Action Jackson	0	0	0	0
Myst IV	0	0	0	0
The Moment of Silence	1	4	7	12
Schizm 2	0	1	0	1
Sherlock Holmes: TSE	0	1	0	1
Syberia 2	2	2	4	8
The Westerner	6	3	2	11

We hope that you enjoyed this booklet. Feel free to visit our forum ([www.theinventory.org/forum](http://www.theinventory.org/forum)) and let us know what you thought of the awards or write to us at [info@theinventory.org](mailto:info@theinventory.org) . Congratulations to all the winners and congratulations even to those that did not win, for their efforts to support the adventure genre. We hope that in 2005 we will see even more great titles.

*Dimitris Manos*

# The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

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